

Self-Concept in Mothers of Educable Mentally Retarded Children

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Dear Editor,

Birth of a mentally retarded child in every family is considered as a challenging event (1). In a typical family the maximum pressure is on mother (2). According to statistics by Iran's state welfare organization in 2006, there are about 2008000 disabled people in Iran, of whom 28795 have mental disabilities (3). However, the problems of families and mothers having children with mental retardation have been extensively neglected (4). No studies are available on the effect of children's conditions on parents' self-concept. Self-concept is defined as combination of perceptions and values that an individual believes to be true of their ownself (5). Therefore, this study aimed to assess self-concept of mothers with educable mentally retarded children. A cross-sectional study was conducted on mothers of 40 educable mentally retarded children in the only primary school special for these children in Aran and Bidgol city in 2010 - 11. Sampling was performed randomly and based on the Poisson model. Having at least a mentally retarded child in primary school (6 - 17 years old) and ability to read and write and not having any mental disorder were selected as inclusion criteria. A two-part questionnaire was used. The first part included questions on demographic information. The second part of instrument was a self-concept questionnaire developed by the researcher through literature review (6). This scale is part of adaptation questionnaire based on the Roy's adaptation model. The self-concept questionnaire consists of 18 items on mothers' believes of themselves and overall score ranged from 0 to 54; 0 - 18 undesirable, 19 - 36 relatively desirable and 37 - 54 desirable self-concept. The content validity of questionnaire was examined by a panel of experts in Tehran University of Medical Sciences. The reliability of questionnaire was assessed through test re-test method on 10 mothers with a two-week interval and the reliability was 0.84. All mothers signed an informed consent. This research was approved by the ethics committee of the research deputy of Tehran University of Medical Sciences

(grant number 25.250.D.2010.). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Fisher's exact test. Mean age of mothers was 28.38 ± 7.95 years old. Most subjects had elementary education (77.5%). Most of them (67.5%) had 2 children and in 37.5% of cases the mentally retarded child was their first child and was male (52.5%). The mean self-concept score of mothers was 29.95 ± 7.60 . Significant relationships were observed between mothers' self-concept and the age of child ($P = 0.02$) and family income ($P = 0.01$). However, no significant relationship was found between mother's age, education, number of children, child's sex and birth rank, with mother's self-concept (Table 1). In this study, the mean self-concept score of mothers with mentally retarded children was relatively desirable. Mothers blame themselves with birth of a child with disability, but some mothers with mentally retarded children trust in God and adapt with the condition using spirituality.

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Table 1. Self-Concept According to Some Mother and Child's Characteristics^a

Variables	Desirable	Relatively Desirable	Undesirable	P Value ^b
Mother's age, y				0.21
25 - 35	2 (5)	15 (37.5)	1 (2.5)	
35 - 45	3 (7.5)	11 (27.5)	0	
45 ≥	2 (5)	4 (10)	2 (5)	
Child's age, y				0.02
5 - 10	0	17 (42.5)	1 (2.5)	
10 - 15	5 (12.5)	9 (22.5)	2 (5)	
15 - 20	2 (5)	4 (10)	0	
Child's sex				0.99
Female	3 (7.5)	5 (12.5)	1 (2.5)	
Male	4 (10)	15 (37.5)	2 (5)	
Number of children				0.31
1 - 3	3 (7.5)	22 (55)	2 (5)	
≥ 3	4 (10)	8 (20)	1 (2.5)	
The child's birth rank				0.08
1th	0	13 (32.5)	2 (5)	
2nd	7 (17.5)	16 (40)	1 (2.5)	
Higher ranks	0	1 (2.5)	0	
Mother's education level				0.68
Elementary	6 (15)	21 (52.5)	3 (7.5)	
Diploma	1 (2.5)	8 (20)	0	
Diploma and academic	0	1 (2.5)	0	
Family income				0.01
Adequate	3 (7.5)	3 (7.5)	0	
Relatively adequate	4 (10)	18 (45)	0	
Inadequate	0 (0)	9 (22.5)	3 (7.5)	

^aValues are expressed as No. (%).

^bFisher's exact test was performed.

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